

BOOK CIRCLE GUIDING QUESTIONS

Book Circle Schedule

- Pay close attention to when each of the **Book Circles** is scheduled for your block, as **each block will have a slightly different schedule** during this unit.

	BLOCK G	BLOCK B
Model Book Circle	Wednesday March 25 th	Thursday March 26 th
Book Circle 1	Friday March 27 th	Monday March 30 th
Book Circle 2	Tuesday March 31 st	Wednesday April 1 st
Book Circle 3	Thursday April 2 nd	Tuesday April 7 th
Book Circle 4	Wednesday April 8 th	Thursday April 9 th
Book Circle 5	Friday April 10 th	Monday April 13 th

Guiding Questions

- Below you will find the guiding questions for every **Book Circle** in our unit.
- Every member** of your book circle is **expected to have answered** these **guiding questions before** the corresponding book circle (including the model book circle).

MODEL BOOK CIRCLE (No Facilitator/Note Taker)

“Battle Royale” by Ralph Ellison (*Border of Focus: Class/Power*)

1. What are the differences between the men watching the battle royal and those taking part? How is the imbalance between spectator and participant created and maintained? How does the narrator navigate between these perspectives at different points of the story?
2. How does the narrator’s perspective as an educated adult looking back on this event compare to his assumptions and beliefs as a recent high-school graduate? How is this contrast especially evident when he delivers his speech in front of the “leading white citizens” of the town?
3. Why do you think there is an emphasis on “blindness” in the story? Why does the narrator need to first discover that he is an invisible man in order to understand who he is? What is the relationship between invisibility and blindness shown here? How does this blindness metaphor contribute to the narrator’s understanding of systems of power within society?

BOOK CIRCLE 1**“Battle Royale” by Ralph Ellison** (*Border of Focus: Race/Ethnicity*)

1. Examine the references to the “magnificent blonde” in the story. What does she represent to the men in the audience, to the men taking part in the battle royal? What might she symbolize to the narrator? What similarities exist between the portrayal of the white female body and the black male bodies in the story?
2. What is the significance of the Grandfather’s dying speech? How in turn does the narrator associate success with guilt or shame? How do different characters in the story define the concept of “success”? Consider the character of the Grandfather and what he represents for the narrator.
3. A central motif throughout the story is the use of animal imagery. Identify the references to animals and consider how they contribute to the story’s representation of race and ethnicity. Is this animal imagery racially charged? Does it serve to empower or weaken those it describes?

BOOK CIRCLE 2**“Boys and Girls” by Alice Munro** (*Border of Focus: Gender Roles*)

1. What roles are assigned to men and to women in the world of this story? How do the characters exemplify aspects of these so-called “masculine” and “feminine” roles? How is the narrator expected to behave compared to Laird? Why might her parents’ expectations differ between their children?
2. The phrase “only a girl” is used in two different situations. What meaning does the phrase have for the narrator in each situation? How does this contribute to the narrator’s developing sense of her own identity?
3. Why does the girl prefer to help her father with his chores rather than to help her mother in the house? What does the girl think of her mother? How do gender roles influence the relationships between men and women in the story?

BOOK CIRCLE 3

“Boys and Girls” by Alice Munro (*Border of Focus: Age and Maturity*)

1. How do particular spaces come to represent freedom and captivity in the story? Is the narrator truly free to navigate these spaces? Why or why not?
2. How does this story depict elements of the narrator’s coming of age? What is the narrator “initiated” into in the story? Of what does she become aware? What are the girl’s dreams like at the start of the story, and how do they differ from those she has at the end? What causes this change?
3. What does the narrator gain and what does she lose in her transition by the end of the story? Do you think what she has become reflects influence more from nature or nurture? Why? Does the narrator see these changes as necessary? Why or why not?

BOOK CIRCLE 4

“D’Sonoqua” by Emily Carr (*Border of Focus: Culture*)

1. Who is this mythic D’Sonoqua? Do some brief research to grasp an idea of her purpose in aboriginal mythology. What is the significance of the narrator’s obsession with this figure she encounters over several years? In the story D’Sonoqua is referred to as a wild woman of the woods. How does the narrator relate to this description herself?
2. What is the narrator’s relationship to this culture? What do we lose and gain from this limited account of the aboriginal myth from the perspective of an outsider?
3. How does the use of what is seen as insensitive language in our contemporary society (in reference to the word “Indian”) demonstrate the time and place of this story? Are these references made with disrespect or ignorance? How might this be a result of the narrator’s cultural upbringing?

BOOK CIRCLE 5

“A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings” by Gabriel García Márquez (*Border of Focus: Realism*)

1. The fantastic elements of this story are interwoven with reality so that the surreal becomes grounded in real characters and struggles. How does this suspended or heightened sense of reality affect a reader’s interpretation of this world?
2. How might this story serve as a parable or allegory for our own reality? How might the characters of this story serve as stereotypes for personalities within our own society?
3. The subtitle for this story is “A Tale for Children.” How does the message of the story change in directing it towards children specifically? Why do you think García Márquez might direct his story to children? What might be the differences between an adult reader's take and a child's?